



# Focus

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## Vessel Boardings: The Basics

### **Why would Department of Ecology select my vessel for boarding?**

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The Department of Ecology (Ecology) screens cargo and passenger vessels entering Washington State to determine the potential risk posed to the marine environment and to public health and safety. Vessel characteristics and background information are applied to a risk matrix. The risk matrix assists Ecology in prioritizing which vessels to board. Vessels given a high priority for boarding are contacted by our inspectors to arrange a time for boarding. Fishing vessels and tank vessels are not screened using a risk matrix. They are boarded on a prearranged schedule. Vessel inspections normally include a review of bunker operations.

### **What should I expect during the inspection?**

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Ecology inspectors will tour the vessel to examine the bridge, engine room, main deck, and accommodation areas. They will review the safety and environmental protection policies and discuss vessel operations with the officers.

### **What is the length of a typical inspection?**

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An inspection typically takes two to three hours, depending on the condition of the vessel.

### **Will the crew be required to perform any drills or exercises?**

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The inspectors do not want to disrupt the regular working schedule of the crew; however, they may request that the crew demonstrate the operation of various equipment. Inspectors may conduct a brief notification drill to ensure vessel officers are aware of local oil spill notification procedures.

### **How does this inspection compare to U.S. Coast Guard or classification society inspections?**

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The focus of Ecology inspections is on human factors and quality management of the vessel. Ecology inspections are designed to complement, rather than duplicate, other regulatory and classification society inspections. Ecology inspections are coordinated with the U.S. Coast Guard.

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## **What are the consequences of the inspection?**

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If no deficiencies or violations are found, the vessel will be issued a preliminary boarding report noting this finding. A letter and a copy of the boarding report will be sent to the owner of the vessel. If only minor deficiencies or violations are found, Ecology will issue a Letter of Concern to the vessel's owner requesting the deficiencies be corrected. If major deficiencies or violations are identified, Ecology may impose operating restrictions, detain the vessel, or levy fines. Any deficiencies or violations identified will be communicated to the U.S. Coast Guard.

## **For more information, contact:**

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